

# GAT

George's Academic Training

# Newsletter

## In this issue:

- New starters
- Good news
- News from Specialised Foundation Programme Doctors
- News from our doctors in training
- News from Academic GP
- ResearchAware taster day
- Save the dates

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**St George's**  
University of London

# New starters

## Cristina Loader



Chadburn Lecturer  
// Infectious  
Diseases

Dr Maria Cristina Loader is an ST8 trainee in Infectious Diseases and Internal Medicine. She joins the Institute of Infection and Immunity as a Chadburn Academic Clinical Lecturer in Infectious Diseases, as part of Professor Jon Friedland's research group. The Chadburn lectureship is funded by the legacy of Miss Maud Chadburn, a pioneer in the medical training and treatment of women. This part-time ACL provides individuals with caring commitments the opportunity to continue to develop their academic careers within medicine. Following core medical training in South Yorkshire, Cristina completed a Masters degree in Tropical

Hygiene & International Health at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Subsequently she obtained an NIHR Academic Clinical Fellowship, followed by a MRC Clinical Research Training Fellowship with Imperial College London, during which she moved to the Peruvian Amazon for her PhD. This investigated the interaction between human helminth and TB infection, dissecting the immune responses leading to tissue damage. During her Chadburn Lectureship she will use the data from her PhD to form the basis for an intermediate fellowship application in the fascinating emerging field of helminth co-infection.

# Good news



**Dr Rae Wake** has been appointed as a Senior Lecturer at SGUL.

This continues Rae's clinical academic pathway at St George's:

- NIHR ACF Infectious Diseases January 2016, leading to PhD on cryptococcal immunity, screening and prevention funded by the Meningitis Research Foundation
- NIHR CL Infectious Diseases April 2020 – April 2024, Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) April 2024

Rae will continue her work on antifungal resistant *Candida* infections and fungal infections in the context of advanced HIV disease in South Africa. She is also appointed as a Consultant in Infectious Diseases and Microbiology at St George's hospital and will contribute part of her time to the clinical infection service.

**Mr James Budge** (Clinical Lecturer, Vascular Surgery) has been awarded two grants focusing on a novel, in house developed, low cost and open-source endovascular simulator. The first grant is the British Society of Endovascular Therapy pump priming award, and focuses on evaluating the face, content and construct validity of this simulator both locally and remotely in sites in the UK. Ahead of a planned national roll out as part of the national vascular training program.

The second grant is from the Royal College of Surgeons Edinburgh as part of their global surgery program. This focuses on the deployment of these simulators in Kenya as part of the development of a national Vascular and Endovascular training program in the region.

# News from Specialised Foundation Programme doctors

## Report on Society of British Neurological Surgeons Spring Meeting 2024

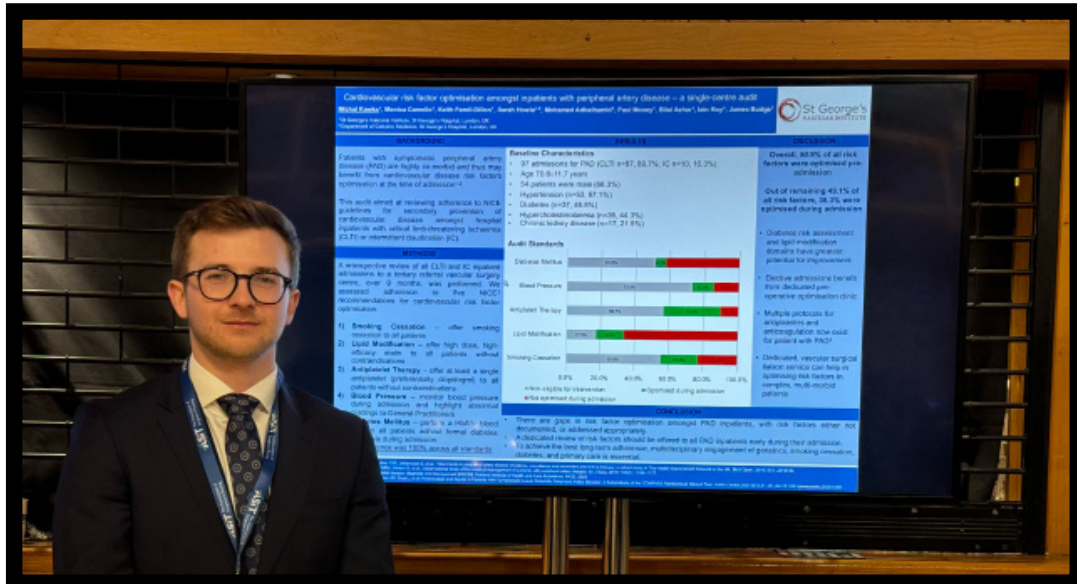
I was delighted to have been given the opportunity to present my research on 4th ventricular stenting in Foramen Magnum Decompression for patients with refractory syringomyelia secondary to Chiari type 1 malformations at the SBNS Spring meeting. I am very grateful to the support from the Isaac Schapera Research Trust and the GAT team who made this possible and thoroughly enjoyed giving my presentation. It was a privilege to have shared this work with so many renowned neurosurgeons from across the globe. I look forward to submitting the study for consideration for publication and I am excited to share the findings of this novel surgical technique further.

- Charles Taylor (SFP, General Practice)



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# News from Specialised Foundation Programme doctors



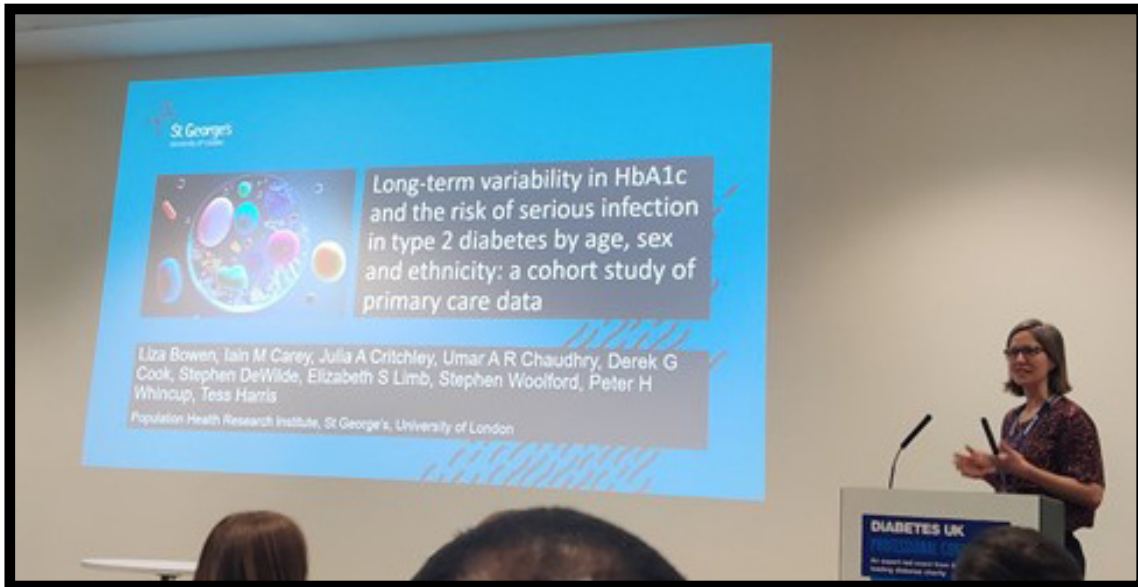
Thanks to support from the Isaac Schapera Research Trust and the GAT Team, I attended Association of Surgeons in Training (ASiT) Annual Conference in Bournemouth (10-12 March 2024). This is Britain and Ireland's biggest pan-speciality surgical conference, attracting over 1000 surgical trainees each year. The conference featured plenary sessions on shape of surgical training, discussions about extended surgical teams, as well as addressed from presidents of all surgical Royal Colleges. During the conference, I had an opportunity to present work done at St George's Vascular Institute, on cardiovascular risk factor optimisation in inpatients with peripheral arterial disease, as a poster presentation.

What is more, I also presented my work on novel robotic resection techniques in thoracic endometriosis syndrome in a plenary session, which was awarded ASiT Robotic Surgery prize for best oral presentation. I also participated in surgical skills workshops and courses, over the course of three days, further honing my operative skills in both dry, and wet lab settings. Overall, the conference was an excellent forum to share ideas, forge new collaborations, and present research to gain valuable feedback, and has been an important building block, contributing to my academic block next year. Thank you to the GAT team for making it possible!

– Michal Kawka (SFP, Vascular Surgery)



# News from doctors in training



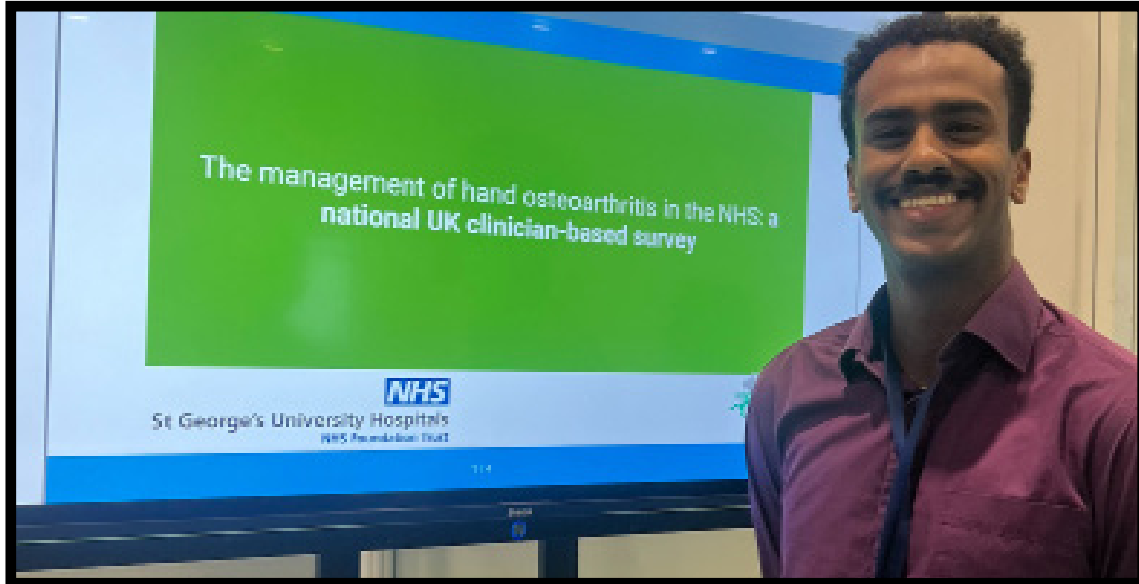
In April 2024, Liza Bowen presented work on behalf of the St George's Primary Care Epidemiology Group at the Diabetes UK conference in London. This work was part of an NIHR Research for Patient Benefit funded study, using routinely collected data (CPRD) to look at infection risks in patients with diabetes.

This piece of work showed that variability in HbA1c measurements is strongly associated with risk of serious infection (requiring hospitalisation). At a population level, HbA1c variability appears to account for more serious infections than average HbA1c level, and the effect is most

pronounced at lower levels of mean HbA1c. The presentation was followed by an interesting discussion around interpretation, what variability may be a marker of, and potential future work looking at variability in HbA1c vs variability in blood glucose levels.

The work has now been published in *Diabetes Research and Clinical Practice*: Effects of long-term HbA1c variability on serious infection risks in patients with type 2 diabetes and the influence of age, sex and ethnicity: A cohort study of primary care data – ScienceDirect. - Liza Bowen (NIHR Academic Clinical Lecturer, General Practice)

# News from doctors in training



Steroids – too much, too little, and not evidence based?

It was a pleasure to attend the British Society of Rheumatology and present our poster on “The management of hand osteoarthritis in the NHS: a national UK clinician-based survey”. It surveyed clinicians across several specialities, surgeons, rheumatology consultants, nurses and allied health professionals. The results of our survey of clinicians found a discrepancy between clinical practice and guidelines. Current guidelines do not recommend steroid injections, however caveat that in certain cases where an inflammatory component is seen, there is scope for clinician choice.

Often clinicians wished to offer these services in their clinic, however time pressures meant this was difficult and therefore they referred to radiology services. This increases the burden on radiology and delays patient care. Clinicians also reported there was benefit in the discussion from steroid injections, however there is no data on who will be a responder and who will not be.

Our survey also found a lack of knowledge on non-pharmacological methods to manage hand osteoarthritis. Further research is needed into hand osteoarthritis, a condition which affects nearly 700 million people worldwide.

- Liban Ahmed (NIHR ACF, Rheumatology)

# News from doctors in training



During my ACF, I have focused on developing my teaching, research and leadership skills in medical education. In 2022, I had been lucky enough to be awarded along with my supervisor Professor Judith Ibison, Professor Jonathan Round and three talented final year students a student staff partnership grant to investigate the student experience of handover. As a result of that work, we are now at the point of submission for publication and more importantly, curriculum development for the final year MBBS students on the complex topic of handover. We are really looking forward to starting an innovative simulation workshop for F year that will give

everyone an opportunity to give and receive a handover as well as demystifying some of the complexity we identified, including how to navigate team dynamics and what clinical hooks (e.g.: key acronyms) are needed to make sense of handover. It was wonderful to win the prize for early career medical education researcher at this year's Society for Academic Primary Care Southeast meeting for this work.

The second project I am very excited about is one that brings patients, faculty, learners and simulated patients together to co-create simulation scenarios on long term conditions for GP trainees. This is in response to current simulation practice which does not include patients as part of curriculum development. I hope it will lead to more authentic and nuanced scenarios in future. I am delighted we have been awarded an \$8,000 grant to bring this work to fruition from the Global Network for Human Simulation Education. Along with Professor Ibison, I have put together a team across 5 institutions for this work and it is very exciting to be working together with forward thinking colleagues from primary care simulation and narrative



# News from doctors in training

medicine for this project.

My other interest is in medical humanities, and I have had the opportunity working under Dr. Deborah Padfield and Professor Annie Bartlett to teach 'Graphic Medicine' to a cohort of our own MBBS students as well as on the exciting extra-curricular module 'The Leg' that we teach to George's and

Birbeck students together. This has been a wonderful way for me to keep my medical humanities knowledge fresh and I am looking forward to attending this year's International Graphic Medicine conference to learn from other colleagues in the field.

-Jacqueline Driscoll (ACF, General Practice)

Selma Audi started her two-year ACF post in November 2023, splitting time between SGUL and a GP clinical post in Battersea. Selma has a background working with researchers to build healthcare start-ups and in health policy and economics. Prior to medical school, she was working in the private sector and as a representative to NICE and the EU commission. As a medical student at SGUL, Selma completed an SSC project in prescribing which led to the publication "The top 100 drugs..." – a rewarding introduction to the research team and culture at the university.

Selma has spent the first six months supporting teaching modules, working with the Primary Care Epidemiology Group to



understand the role of health economics alongside current and future research, and evaluating the role of GenAI in general practice. She has also successfully passed her MRCGP examinations - which means that the next 18 months will be focused on getting to know the wider team and driving projects forward!

- Selma Audi (ACF, Primary Care)

# News from doctors in training



Eight years have passed since the emergence of the congenital Zika virus epidemic in the northeast of Brazil and affected families continue to confront significant health and social challenges.

In March 2024, I travelled to Recife, Brazil to join representatives from research, public health agencies, Brazilian ministry of health, advocacy groups, and families of children with congenital Zika syndrome (CZS) to participate in a scientific meeting entitled 'Consequences of Zika virus infections during pregnancy: Integrating research, care, and community.' At the meeting, we launched the LIFE Zika (Long-term

Impacts for Families affected by the Epidemic of Zika) Study, a seven-year Wellcome funded (£4M) collaborative project, aiming to:

- (i) define the natural history of CZS in the first 12 years of life, including the frequency of late-onset manifestations, hospitalisations, and deaths
- (ii) compare neurodevelopment and learning-related outcomes in children with and without CZS
- (iii) evaluate long-term consequences of CZS for families



# News from doctors in training



(iv) critically interrogate the experience of families engaging in research and data sharing initiatives during and after public health emergencies.

On the last day of our meeting, we were joined by some of the Recife cohort of children with congenital Zika syndrome and their families. We organised a party for the children and spent time

speaking to, and listening to the families about the challenges they face in day-to-day life. They told us about their priorities for research and we discussed the ways that we would strengthen our partnerships and collaborative working throughout our study.

-Nuria Sanchez Clemente (NIHR Clinical Lecturer, Paediatrics)

# News from doctors in training



Joe was appointed as an NIHR academic clinical fellow at St George's back in 2016. He has worked under the supervision of Professor Mary N Sheppard undertaking research into sudden cardiac death, completing a PhD on anatomical, histological and immunohistochemical findings in the normal heart and cardiomyopathies which was funded by Cardiac Risk in the Young. He progressed to become an NIHR clinical lecturer in 2022.

He was awarded an Association of Clinical Pathologists Travel Fund of £1000 to undertake an observership placement at the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM), Melbourne, Victoria, Australia in February 2024 with Adjunct

Associate Professor Sarah Parsons. We have been collaborating on a number of cardiovascular pathology projects including the quadricuspid pulmonary valve which has just been published in Cardiovascular Pathology Journal (Duffy M, Parsons S, Westaby J, Sheppard M. Incidence of Quadricuspid Pulmonary Valves at Post-mortem Examination. Cardiovasc Pathol. 2024 Mar 21:107636).

The VIFM is a leader in global forensic pathology. The VIFM receives 7000 deceased persons per year from the entire state of Victoria. They are photographed, computed tomography (CT) scanned and a preliminary toxicology screen is undertaken. Circumstances from the police, family and

# News from doctors in training

other sources are obtained by a support team. All data and results are compiled on a single dedicated computer program. A preliminary decision is made as to whether to proceed to internal examination or perform an external examination only and whether to do a more comprehensive toxicological screen in conjunction with the coroner. Frequently a cause of death is issued or just full toxicology is performed with 45% proceeding to internal examination.

Joe delivered the institute lunchtime lecture on the way that the Cardiac Risk in the Young (CRY) cardiovascular pathology laboratories operate. The lecture covered the referral pathway to our labs, how we examine the hearts, the causes of death in our database of over 7000 sudden cardiac deaths and then the diagnostic criteria we use for the different conditions. The lecture was well received with many questions asked at the end.

Joe would like to thank the Association of Clinical Pathologists for funding the trip, the National Institute of Clinical Research for funding his salary, Professor Sheppard, the CRY pathology team as well as the Integrated Academic Training team for their support and Cardiac Risk in the Young for funding the Cardiovascular Pathology Laboratories.

- Joseph Westaby (NIHR Clinical Lecturer in Histopathology)





# News from doctors in training



Stephen is an ST3 GP trainee and joined St George's in August 2023. Stephen grew up in London and moved to the south coast to study medicine at the University of Southampton, graduating in 2018. He then completed the Academic Foundation Programme with the MRC Lifecourse Epidemiology Centre in 2020. His early research was focussed on large epidemiological cohort studies and health outcomes throughout the lifecourse, including the effects of maternal health on offspring early-life bone health and associations between frailty and COVID-19. He then returned to London to start his academic GP training in 2021 and is currently working in the Population Health Research Institute under the supervision of Prof Tess Harris. Stephen's research interests have more

recently transitioned into exploring the intersection between epidemiology, public health, and primary care. He is currently co-chief investigator for The Hidden Workload Study, the first national mixed methods study investigating unrecorded workload in general practice and the associations between workload and practice local demographics. To find out more about The Hidden Workload Study please go to [www.gppact.org/the-hidden-workload-study](http://www.gppact.org/the-hidden-workload-study).

Stephen is also passionate about advocating for the important role of academia in general practice. Stephen is the Communications Lead for the Primary care Academic CollaboraTive (PACT), a research network of over 700 general practice clinicians across the UK who want to learn more about research and participate in large national studies using collaborative methods. To find out more about PACT please go to [www.gppact.org](http://www.gppact.org).

Stephen is always happy to chat with anyone with similar research interests, so please send him an email if there is anything you would like to discuss: [swoolfor@sgul.ac.uk](mailto:swoolfor@sgul.ac.uk)

- Stephen Woolford (ACF, General Practice)

# News from Academic General Practice

I'm delighted to have commenced my new role in January 2024. This new fellowship will allow me to continue working with the Migrant Health Research group within the Institute of Infection and Immunity under Dr Sally Hargreaves, as well enabling strong links with the Population Health Research Institute, where I will be being supervised by Professor Tess Harris. My fellowship is focused around improving provision of holistic initial health assessments for migrant patients in primary care, particularly focusing on non-communicable diseases, and will enable me to develop my skills in quantitative methodologies, integrating methodological approaches and co-design. It's been a busy few months right from the get-go, kicking off in January supporting Dr Jessica Carter in leading a co-design day entitled: 'Preventative Care: From Research Inception to Policy for our newly-formed Migrant Health Community Research Network which brings together individuals from over 25 different countries and community migrant organisations to work in meaningful partnership with the Migrant Health Research group. The finalised infographic about the group from this day is shared above.

I've also had the opportunity to visit and collaborate with colleagues from the Migrant Health Research Group in IS-



Global Barcelona, present at the Society of Academic Primary Care SE meeting in January, and lecture within SGUL's Primary Care Seminar Series and on the Masters of Public Health at the University of Edinburgh. It's also been fantastic to be able to see some of my previous projects come to fruition such as the recent publication of a viewpoint on 'Strengthening life-course immunisation in migrant populations: access, equity, and inclusion' in the Lancet Regional Health - Europe ([https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanep/article/PIIS2666-7762\(23\)00225-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanep/article/PIIS2666-7762(23)00225-9/fulltext)).

Overall, I am very pleased to be taking the next steps in my career as a clinical academic at St George's.

- Felicity Knights (NIHR In-Practice Fellow, General Practice)

# ResearchAware Taster Day

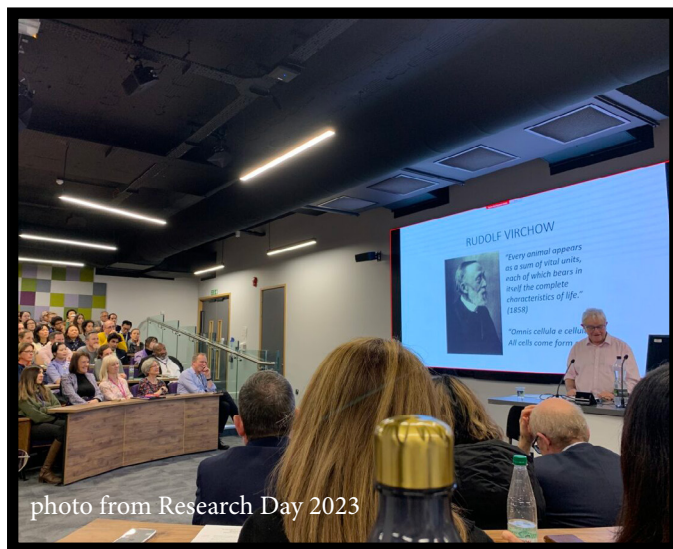
On 11 April GAT ResearchAware ran a research taster day session for medical and healthcare students and professionals interested in developing research careers at St George's. Around 50 attendees had the opportunity to meet members of eight different research groups from the Infection and Immunity, Neuroscience and Cell Biology and Cardiovascular and Genomics Research institutes and interact with some of their research in a relaxed and welcoming environment. We hope many will have been inspired to build on their clinical and biomedical research portfolios at St George's!



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# Save the date



## Research Day 2024

Research Day is an annual event to showcase the world class research done at St George's. It is an opportunity for staff and students to meet and share ongoing research work and ideas, to promote discussion and to strengthen collaboration across the university. Research Day 2024 will take place on Wednesday 11 December.

## NIHR Academy Members' Conference 2024



### NIHR Academy Members' Conference

NIHR Academy members are strongly encouraged to attend this year's NIHR Academy Members' Conference which will be held on 19 and 20 November 2024. For further details please click here: [NIHR Academy Members' Conference 2024](#)

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